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form, to say the least, an agreeable alternative to other of the familiar accounts of this period in English.

The author has read largely, but almost exclusively the secondary Italian sources. These, of course, often contain documentary material in a convenient form, and Mr. Thayer seems to have made no effort to go beyond this. He even neglects Reuchlin's work entirely, in spite of its recognized position as the most careful treatment of Italian affairs since 1815. This is much as if one were to write a history of France since the Restoration, basing his work exclusively upon the historical writings of Louis Blanc, Garnier-Pagès, and the memoirs of Guizot. The Italian publicists of the same period were certainly no more judicial, nor can we expect them to review the past in an unpartisan spirit. Few among us read Italian, however, and it is worth while to know how it all seemed to the participants themselves. The author often obtrudes his own opinions, and these sometimes upon topics and in places where they are in no way called for. Protection, evangelicism, and everything monarchical, each receives a frequent dig. How far the historian should be explicitly and avowedly didactic is a question which each must settle for himself. There is certainly a danger in attempting always to take sides, and the experienced historian becomes more and more tolerant. Without an instinctive desire to see the other side and a proneness to suspend judgment in the presence of motives but half understood, no really worthy history can be written.

J. H. R.

Dell' Abbreviature nella Paleografia Latina, studio di ZANINO VOLTA. Con 36 Tavole litografiche e figure in zincotopia intercalate nel testo. Pp. 328. Milano: Max Kantorowicz, 1892.

The conscientious use of sources in the study of history necessitates an accurate knowledge of paleography and diplomatics. In the former the most difficult and important branch is the interpretation of abbreviations. They are common in all documents of the later middle ages, and in some hardly a word is written in full. The difficulties of the subject can be appreciated from a few facts. In this book fifty-nine separate words are enumerated, which are represented by the letter S, without any distinctive marks. D. D. may be read in twenty-six ways. Some general rules are followed, but, as our author is fond of insisting, in any case the usage of the time and the idiosyncrasies or carelessness of the copyist may have introduced what seems at first hopeless confusion. In fact, the learned Mabillon confessed his inability to understand some signs.

Professor Volta has chosen for his field the Italian codices and charters of the X-XV centuries. In his preface he promises the signs

for 2500 abbreviations, in his book he gives nearly 4000. When necessary for comparison, he does not hesitate to transcend the limits he has chosen. But these centuries were especially the age of abbreviations. Before the earlier date comparatively few and simple signs were used. As manuscripts of various kinds became more common and more necessary the costliness of parchment necessitated economy in space, the laborious process of transcription by hand necessitated economy in labor. Consequently, abbreviations became more and more frequent, until the invention of printing and the use of paper did away with the need for such economies.

A third reason for abbreviations also had much weight in the middle ages. The air of mystery which surrounded certain branches of learning was enhanced by the use of cabalistic signs, known only by the initiated, and regarded with superstitious awe by the credulous populace. In this way we can explain the use of certain signs which required more labor and took up more space than the words written in full.

After a critical introduction the author discusses abbreviations according to their forms; *e.g.*, "single letters," "monograms," "abbreviations by indeterminate signs," etc. For the sake of "good measure" he adds an interesting chapter on numerals, in which he treats of the Greek, Roman and Arabic signs, with their histories. For each division he gives practical rules and numerous examples. He usually arranges the latter alphabetically, which makes the book comparatively easy to use, although there is no index.

The final chapter is on the subsidiary value of these signs as a means of determining the age of a document. On this subject there has been much confusion. Facts true for one country have been stated as general rules. But, remembering strictly the limits of nationality, documents can usually be placed within a half century, and sometimes much more closely by a careful study of the method of abbreviation used.

Aside from the lack of index, it is to be regretted that the author gives so few cross references and has omitted a table of works cited. But his aim has been cheapness and to this he subordinates everything possible in a scientific treatment of the subject. Long years of teaching and great enthusiasm have especially fitted Volta for the preparation of such a handbook. Not only his students, who have incited him to the task, but all paleographers will be grateful to him for this handy and scholarly treatise.

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